

Work with community based organizations to improve and encourage litter control and beautification projects

Explore funding options and seek alternative approaches to accomplishing the placement of utilities underground

Continue to ensure nonconforming signs are in compliance with current standards as properties are redeveloped and investigate reducing the number of public signs by eliminating or consolidating unnecessary one as allowed by code.

Encourage the incorporation of public art in both public and private sector developments

II. Study Overview

II.A Introduction

In February of 2009 District 2 Commissioner Bob Ott along with the other Board of Commissioners requested the Community Development Agency to develop a corridor study for a section of Powers Ferry Road. The Powers Ferry Road Corridor Study and Master Plan is a mid-to-long range plan that will accommodate future growth and improve the quality of life for residents, employees, and visitors of the area. By addressing land use, transportation and economic development issues, the Powers Ferry Master Plan will encourage a diversity of residential neighborhoods, employment, and shopping choices that are easily accessible for all modes of transportation.

The study area has excellent access to the interstate highway system and includes a network of five interconnected arterial roadways. In addition, there has been a considerable investment over time in residential, commercial, and office development within the study area. Residential developments blend older more mature Townhome, Condominium developments, and multi-family dwellings with some newer townhomes, condominiums, and few single-family detached structures. Commercial development is mostly located along the corridor with direct access to at least one of the five arterial roadways. Retail makes up most of the commercial in the northern half of the study area while the southern end, which includes the Cumberland Community Improvement District, is comprised of mostly office developments.

II.B Purpose

The Powers Ferry corridor area represents some of the best of what urban/suburban communities have to offer. Cultural and business diversity, high visibility for marketing and its proximity to regional attractions such as Cumberland Mall, Cobb Galleria and The Cobb Energy Performing Arts Center all provide great assets for the residents and patrons of the area. The lower end of Powers Ferry is within the Cumberland Community

Improvement District (CCID), which contains a collection of some of Cobb's largest office institutions and consequently a hub of regional employment. The Powers Ferry area also boasts a strong connection to the natural environment with its proximity to the Chattahoochee National Recreational Area and the Chattahoochee River.

At first glance, the corridor appears to be in good shape; however as one of the older developed communities of the county, it is also one of the first to experience aging infrastructure and buildings, both commercial and residential in nature. Closer examination reveals some residential structures in decline and disconnected from the commercial centers, derelict shopping centers with underutilized asphalt and unattractive facades add to the lack of identity and pride for the community. Additionally, vacant hotel/motel structures and office buildings are present, along with a transportation infrastructure that may be inadequate to deal with peak traffic volumes and unsafe for bicyclists and pedestrians in some areas.

This plan is broad in its focus with reasonable aspirations. Strategies are identified to build pride in the community, but the greater intent is to improve the overall quality of life for residents.

The primary purpose of this plan is to effect change in an urban/suburban environment experiencing real and perceived deterioration by creating a single comprehensive vision of the community's desires for the future. This plan will provide an educational tool that gives citizens, property owners, developers, and adjacent communities a clear indication of what is expected in the future for Powers Ferry Road. These pertinent objectives directed the development of this master plan. The key objectives of the plan are to:

- Ensure future development/redevelopment is guided by a community vision
- Improve quality of life for residents, businesses, & visitors
- Enhance stability with economic development efforts
- Coordinate public improvements and private developments
- Serve as a decision-making tool

II.C Study Area

The study area (**Figure 3**) is bounded to the north by Delk Road and the City of Marietta. The southern extent stretches to Windy Ridge Parkway with the eastern boundary line strategically chosen to include uses that were not unique to the character of the Powers Ferry Road corridor and the western boundary was terminated along the obvious line of demarcation of Interstate 75.

The eastern boundary of the study area was chosen due to the changes in the character of the areas. Along the east side of Powers Ferry are intense commercial and high dense residential uses, where as just outside the study area are less dense, single family homes and federally owned open space. The western boundary follows the I-75 corridor that provides a clear delineation from the Powers Ferry market area to the Cobb Parkway market area. The northern boundary was deliberately set with the intent of not crossing over jurisdictional boundaries with the City of Marietta but coordinating with the city on planning efforts that have been conducted by the City. The southern extent of the study area was one of the more discussed items early in the planning effort. It was suggested that the study boundary be moved further south to encompass I-285 and properties south and east of I-75 to the Chattahoochee River. Upon further discussion, the southern extent of the boundary was chosen to terminate at Windy Ridge Parkway because of proposed Transit-Oriented Development planning efforts inside I-285 between I-75 and the Chattahoochee River and not encroaching into the core area of the Cumberland Community Improvement District (CCID).

Sill, almost three quarters of the lower end of the planning area, from approximately Terrell Mill Road south, is covered by the CCID. The CCID was Georgia's first Community Improvement District (CID) established by business leaders in 1988 to improve access to Atlanta's northwest market.

The CCID is a public-private partnership driven by the area's commercial property owners, who pay an additional five mills of property taxes to help fund roads, trails, streetscapes, alternative commutes, plans and studies within the CID. Over the last 20 years, the CCID has leveraged multiple millions of dollars into potential billions in projects that are completed, under construction or slated for construction.

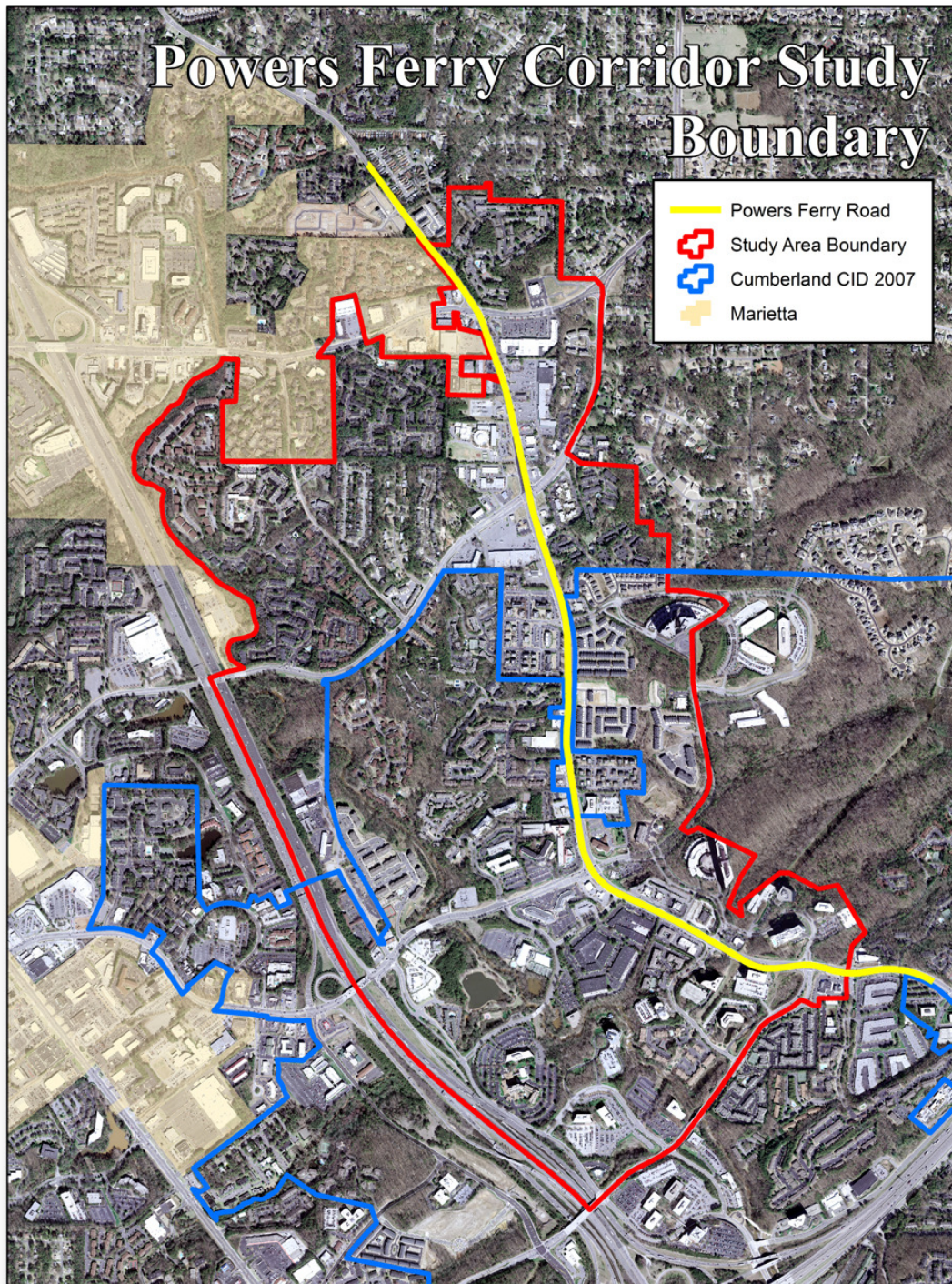


Figure 3

II.D Planning Process

The Planning Division of Cobb County Community Development was asked to guide the Powers Ferry Master Plan process through various stages that included, data gathering, analysis, public involvement, master plan development, and document creation. The study was completed over the course of 10 months, beginning in May of 2009 and ending in January of 2010. Planning Division staff took a four level approach toward guidance for the development of the plan. These four approaches formulated our public involvement strategy. The first level was focus group sessions with key residents and business representatives. The second level was the Project Management Team, consisting of staff from Cobb County Community Development, Cobb County Department of Transportation, Cobb County Economic Development, Cobb County Water Department and the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce. The third level consisted of 18 Stakeholders with various interests throughout the study area and the fourth level included the general public, which were actively involved in the planning process.

Planning Process	2009								2010
Tasks	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
Existing Conditions Research and Market Analysis									
Public Participation Process									
Development of Final Report									

Figure 4

Development for the Powers Ferry Master Plan was organized by three broad overarching tasks. **Figure 4** is a brief description of the tasks and schedule that was followed to assure completion of the project by January 2010. A more detailed schedule can be found in Appendix A.1.

The first tasks included existing conditions, defined by on-site observations, research, and outreach to assess and determine area needs. The existing conditions phase included:

Initial site visits to help define the community, stability, trends and changes that may affect the area (Appendix A.2)

An in-depth analysis of the existing land use, future land use, zonings, approved developments, the quality of the natural environment, architectural value and visual interest, traffic and circulation patterns, the transit system and pedestrian amenities.

Census research coupled with Claritas estimates and projections to evaluate demographic changes within the corridor over time.

A review of existing relevant planning documents covering the study area and a review of peer communities and their approach to similar redevelopment efforts.

Conducting focus groups to gain initial thoughts and concerns regarding the future of the Powers Ferry area

The second tasks involved public outreach efforts in creating a community-driven plan. The public participation process included:

Focus Groups

Development of Master Plan website

Stakeholder Committee Meetings

Leadership Interviews

Public Meetings

The final task for the project was the development of the plan by linking information gathered from the planning process to the goals, policies and conceptual master plan. It is at this stage that a community vision was created as well as an implementation strategy to guide and track the progress of the plan's components.

Formation of guiding principles

Development of vision, goals, policies and conceptual master plan map

Creation of the Implementation Strategy

A Final Powers Ferry Master Plan

The intention of these efforts is to create a collective vision for the future of the Powers Ferry corridor and an action plan that addresses the needs of the residents, businesses, and property owners to help reverse potential deterioration along the corridor. Through this process it is expected that a new future will result for the Powers Ferry Road community, a future that includes redevelopment and revitalization.

II.E Public Participation

Engaging the public is one of the most essential steps in creating a vision and action plan. It is the inclusive, public participatory process that allows for the forging of broad public consensus on key community goals that reflect the needs and desires of the community. The Powers Ferry Corridor Study provided several venues for participation through Focus Group discussions, the formation of a Stakeholder group, Leadership interviews, and 3 public meetings over the course of 4 months. Additionally, a project website was developed to inform interested parties on upcoming meetings and to provide presentations and meeting summaries for those who were not able to attend the public gatherings. There was also a comment form for submitting comments via the internet.

Focus Group

At the outset of the project, the Planning Division staff conducted three focus group sessions with six key residences and business owners who were appointed by District 2 Commissioner Bob Ott. The purpose of the focus group sessions was to garner initial thoughts on the corridor and ideas on ways to enhance the Powers Ferry community. The first session was geared toward the generalities of the Powers Ferry Corridor by looking at the broad components of planning and issuing questions related to the advantages and disadvantages of the study area. The second focus group session highlighted more specific issues of land use and transportation by pointing out concerns on maps to assist in understanding not only what the issues are but where they are. The final focus group session was a brainstorming event discussing and gathering thoughts on a Powers Ferry vision as well as goals and action items that could be suggested to accomplish a better quality of life for current and future residents and business owners of Power Ferry. Results from these sessions can be found in Appendix A.3.

Stakeholder Group

Upon the completion of the Focus Group sessions a Stakeholder Committee was established and consisted of 18 appointed citizens with various backgrounds including Property owners, Business owners, Residents, Developers, representatives from civic organizations, Cobb County School System and a neighborhood liaison from the Brazilian community.

The prime objective for the Powers Ferry Stakeholder committee was to generate and evaluate ideas. The committee reviewed and recommended changes to information regarding the Powers Ferry Plan. This included offering ideas and recommendations on public presentations, the vision, goals, and implementation items and assisted in the public outreach effort. The Powers Ferry Stakeholder Committee met 3 times during the public participation phase of the study and then one last time to review the draft vision, goals, policies and implementation strategy. Names and interest are listed below in **Figure 5**.

Stakeholder Committee for Powers Ferry Master Plan	
Name	Interest
James Beak	Real Estate/Developer
Tom Boland	Cumberland CID/Cobb Chamber of Commerce
Bill Carver	Resident
Tricia Clements	Resident
Erik Jacobson	Resident
Linda Karlo	Business Owner / Resident
Jim Lavallo	Real Estate/Commercial Property Owner
Richard Massicott	Business
Ed Ogletree	Real Estate/Developer
Christane Castilho Pope	Brazilian Community/Community Relations Board
Dr. Amanda Richie	Cobb County School System
Calvin Rhodes	Terrill Mill Community Association / Resident
Woody Snell	Developer
Magaret Stagmeir	Multi-Family Property Owner
Peter Tennis	Real Estate/Commercial Property Owner
Mike Voegtle	Business
Don Walter	Multi-Family Property Owner
David Wyatt	Business (Publix)

Figure 5

Leadership Interviews

Another informational gathering exercise was conducting leadership interviews. Staff interviewed elected officials, appointed officials and key county personnel to ascertain their thoughts on the existing state of the Powers Ferry corridor as well as to gain insight into what their expectations are for the future of corridor. Notable outcomes from these interviews revolved mostly around potential policies that could be established to incentivize residential and commercial redevelopment and infrastructure improvements

along the corridor to improve traffic congestion and provide other modes of transportation.



Public Meetings

The community input process was augmented by three open public meetings as forums to discuss various aspects of the Powers Ferry Road area. All three meetings were advertised through the project website, business cards, fliers, road signs and Stakeholders. Minutes from the Public Meetings can be found in Appendix A.4.

A Public Kick-Off meeting was held on July 20, 2009 at Brumby Elementary School. 103 participants watched as the Planning Division team presented existing conditions analysis and findings. Following the presentation attendees asked questions and offered feedback through break-out sessions on the positive and negative aspects of the corridor as well as opportunities on future growth and quality of life objectives to move forward in the community vision.

A Design Charrette was held on August 24, 2009 at Brumby Elementary School that attracted 125 participants. After a brief overview of the findings from the previous meeting, the audience was split into 5 groups for a “hands on” interactive design forum for collaboration on developing a conceptual map that would provide a visual representation of the community vision for the Powers Ferry Master Plan. A community participant from each of the five groups was chosen to present the scenarios and discuss concepts with the rest of the participants at the end of the session. This allowed all participants to hear the ideas being formulated by the community.

On October 6, 2009 the Powers Ferry community gathered at Brumby Elementary school for the final public meeting. The “Open House” style meeting provided another opportunity for public input on all aspects of the plan including the recommended community vision, goals, policies, and conceptual master plan map. There were 62 participants that focused on the presentation and walked the room viewing displays and maps. Following the meeting the presented material was added to the Powers Ferry Master Plan website to gain additional feedback from the public.

